Friends of the ROUGE

MONITORING DEPARTMENT

ROUGE RIVER

STONEFLY SEARCH REPORT

2026

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Rouge River Watershed 2026 Winter Stonefly Search

Sixty-one people participated in Friends of the Rouge (FOTR)'s 2026 Winter Stonefly Search on January 24, 2026. The weather on January 24 was bitter, bitter cold with the wind-chill below 0°F, but the amazing community of FOTR bug hunters still came out bundled up and ready to search! Team leaders employed ice picks, spuds, and pickaxes to successfully break the ice and sample in many locations.

This report contains data for 34 sites (table 1 pg. 5 and map pg. 6). Ten teams visited twenty sites, plus one site sampled at Schoolcraft College by faculty who collected samples. Eight additional sites were sampled by Wayne County Department of Public Services, and five by Sue Thompson.

Stoneflies were found at eight of the thirty-four sites (24%) (map pg. 6 and table pg. 5). All were found on the Lower branch in Fellows Creek and Fowler Creek, as well as in Johnson Creek, a Middle branch tributary. All but one of the sites had slender winter stoneflies (Capnids — family Capniidae). The only stonefly from the Taeniopterygidae family was found at the John2 site.

Stoneflies are sensitive indicators of healthy streams. Unlike other insects, winter stoneflies develop into adult flies in the winter. The Winter Stonefly Search is part of Friends of the Rouge's volunteer benthic macroinvertebrate monitoring program.

A very small capnid stonefly found in Fowler Creek sitting in a plastic spoon.

Lower Branch

Eleven sites were visited on the Lower Branch: five on Fellows Creek, four on Fowler Creek and two on the main branch of the Lower. Two of the eleven sites (18%) had stoneflies, and all were slender winter stoneflies (Capnids). Stoneflies were found at one site in Fowler Creek (Fowl1), and one site in the Fellows Creek (LR-9).

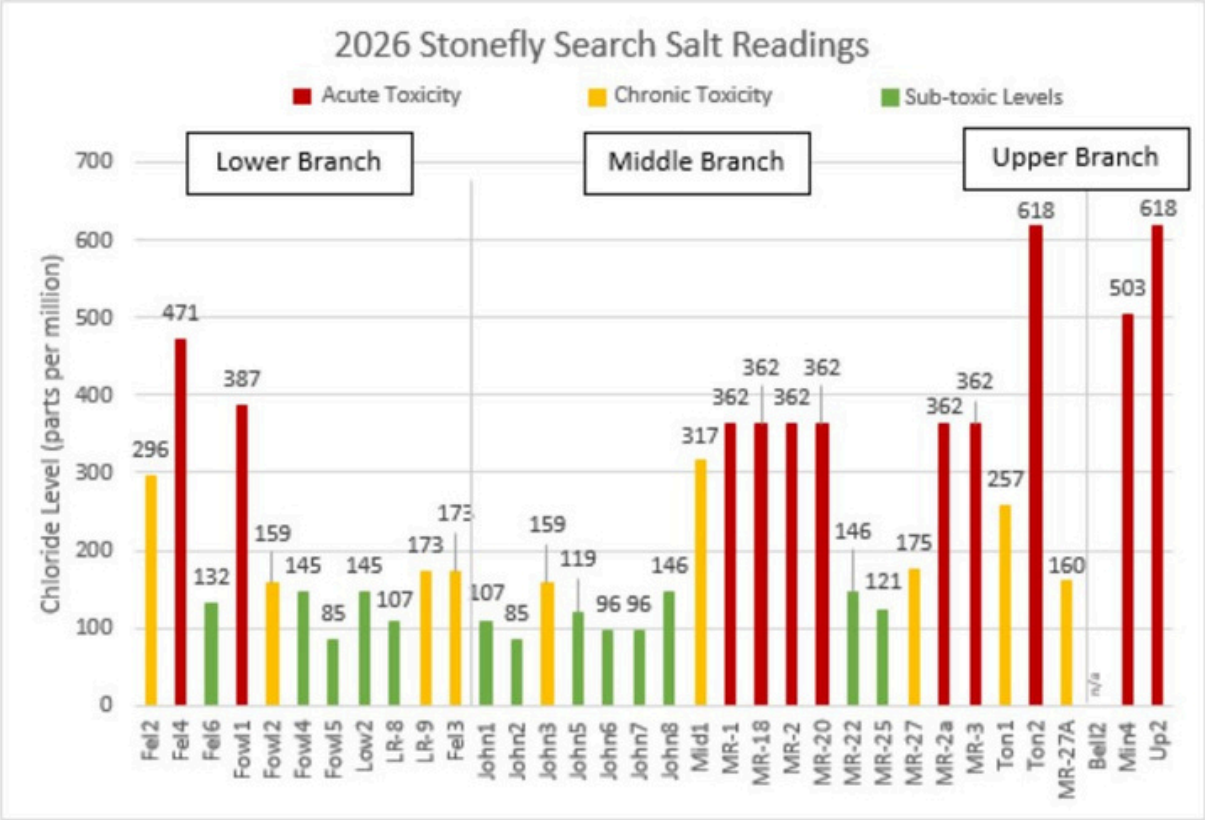
Middle Branch

Twenty sites were sampled on the Middle Branch: eleven on Johnson Creek, two on Tonquish Creek, and seven on the Middle branch. Six of the twenty sites (30%) had stoneflies and were found on the Johnson Creek and the main branch of the Middle Rouge. All sites except John2 (which had the only Taeniopterygidae) had slender winter stoneflies (Capniidae).

Upper Branch

Three Upper Branch sites were sampled. These sites included one site on Bell Creek, one site on Minnow Pond, and one on the main Upper branch. No stoneflies were found at any of the sites in the Upper Branch. Stoneflies are very rarely found in the Upper Branch.

FOTR Stonefly Search teams have been testing sites for road salt (chloride) since 2020 through the Izaak Walton League's Salt Watch program. Chloride is measured in parts per million (ppm). Levels below 150 ppm are represented by the green bars. Levels above 150 ppm cause harmful impacts to aquatic life in the stream (chronic toxicity). These values are represented by the orange bars in the graph below. Levels above 320 ppm are toxic to aquatic life (acute toxicity). These are represented by the red bars in the graph below.



The 2026 chloride levels (see graph above, and table pg. 5) varied by the branch. Almost half of the Lower Branch sites had salt levels greater than 150ppm. The highest was at Fel4 (Flodin Park). Sixty percent of samples taken in the Middle branch (12 of 20) had levels above 150ppm, three in the Johnson Creek and seven downstream in the Middle Branch. Additionally, seven of the sites in the Middle branch had levels surpassing the 320ppm acute toxicity levels. This can cause severe impacts to exposed plants and animals from short periods of exposure, and one exceeded the limit of the test strip at more than 618ppm. Two of the three Upper branch sites sampled for stoneflies were sampled for chloride, with both above 320 ppm.

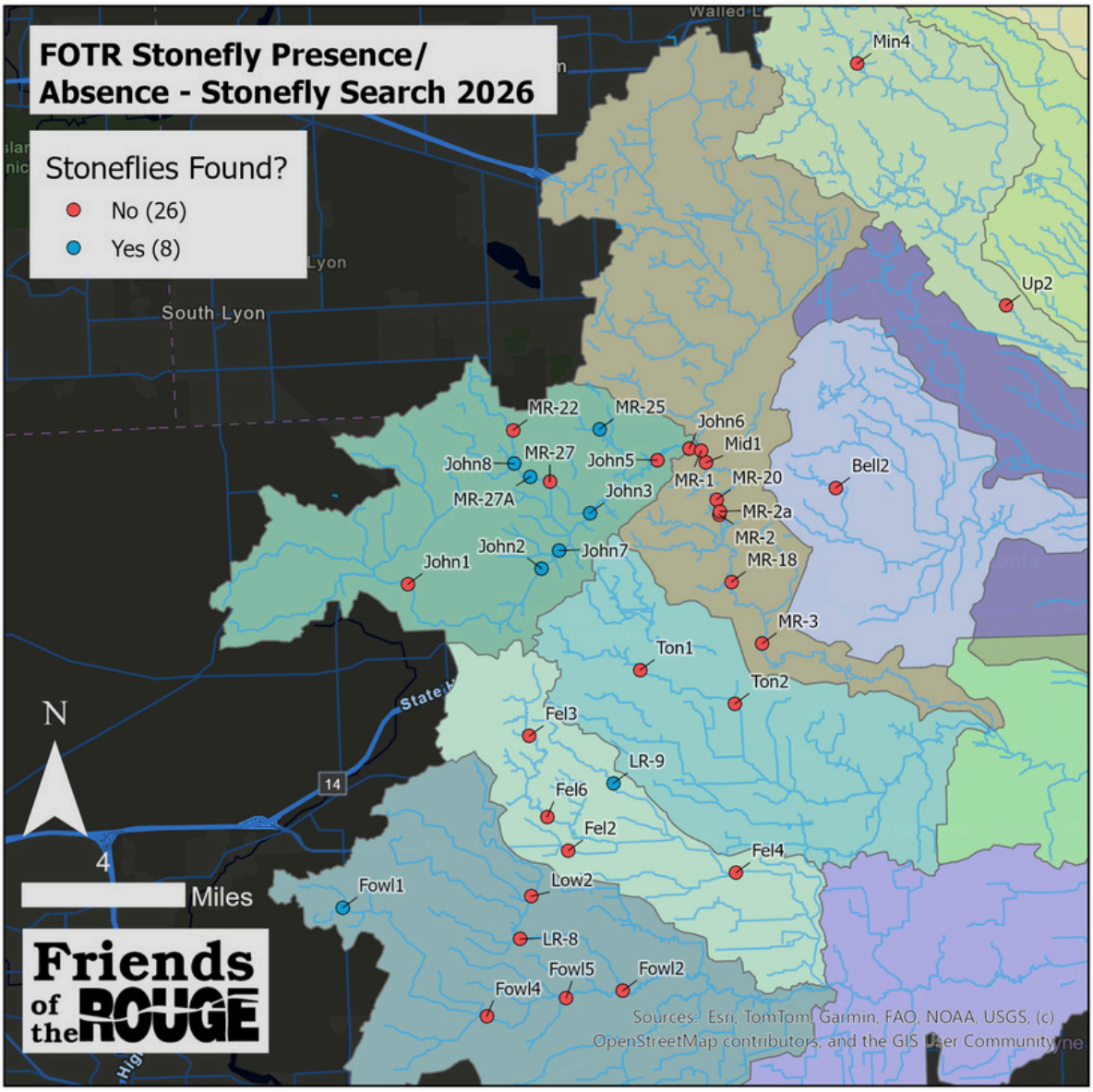
In 2024, FOTR received a grant from the EGLE Nonpoint Source Unit with the goal of supporting ongoing assessment of the extent of chloride impairment in the Rouge River through targeted monitoring. The data was collected using four different methods that included EGLE's required protocol for impairment designations so that waterbodies can be assessed for chloride impairment and potential listing. A report of our findings is available on our website at therouge.org/chloride-monitoring-in-the-rouge-river/. You can sign up for the Salt Watch program and receive free test strips to test stream sites during the winter on your own and are encouraged to do so. Check out their map of the salt results , and see how the Rouge compares to other areas. There are also many great tips on how to reduce salt in your community on the Salt Watch website.

Thank you to all the volunteers, Team Leaders, Wayne County, and Sue Thompson for additional sampling. The Winter Stonefly Search is part of Friends of the Rouge's long-term volunteer monitoring program and was made possible by Mercedes-Benz Financial Services.

Mercedes-Benz
Financial Services

See you at Stonefly Search 2027!

Branch	Stream Name	FIELDID	Site Description	Stoneflies Present?	Stonefly Family	Salt (ppm)
Lower	Fellows Creek	Fel2	Vintage Valley	N		296
Lower	Fellows Creek	Fel3	Ann Arbor Rd	N		173
Lower	Fellows Creek	Fel4	Flodin Pk	N		471
Lower	Fellows Creek	Fel6	Hanford	N		132
Lower	Fowler Creek	Fowl1	Prospect	Y	Capniidae	387
Lower	Fowler Creek	Fowl2	Fowler Beck	N		159
Lower	Fowler Creek	Fowl4	Ridge Rd S of Geddes	N		145
Lower	Fowler Creek	Fowl5	Fowler Denton	N		85
Lower	Lower Rouge	Low2	Cherry Hill	N		145
Lower	Lower Rouge	LR-8	Ridge Proctor	N		107
Lower	Fellows Creek	LR-9	Fellows Beck Warren	Y	Capniidae	173
Middle	Johnson Creek	John1	5M Salem	N		107
Middle	Johnson Creek	John2	5M NV	Y	Taeniopterygidae	85
Middle	Johnson Creek	John3	6M NV	Y	Capniidae	159
Middle	Johnson Creek	John5	Fish Hatchery Pk	N		119
Middle	Johnson Creek	John6	Hines	N		96
Middle	Johnson Creek	John7	Arcadia	Y	Capniidae	96
Middle	Johnson Creek	John8	Maybury Angell	Y	Capniidae	146
Middle	Middle Rouge	Mid1	Northville Rec E	N		317
Middle	Middle Rouge	MR-1	Northville Rec W	N		362
Middle	Middle Rouge	MR-18	Springbrook Rec	N		362
Middle	Middle Rouge	MR-2	Reservoir Rd	N		362
Middle	Middle Rouge	MR-20	Waterford Bd	N		362
Middle	Johnson Creek	MR-22	Maybury south	N		146
Middle	Johnson Creek	MR-25	Maybury East	Y	Capniidae	121
Middle	Johnson Creek	MR-27	Ridge	N		175
Middle	Johnson Creek	MR-27A	Florissant Dr.	Y	Capniidae	160
Middle	Middle Rouge	MR-2a	Reservoir Rd W	N		362
Middle	Middle Rouge	MR-3	Plym Riverside	N		362
Middle	Tonquish Creek	Ton1	Plym Twp Pk	N		257
Middle	Tonquish Creek	Ton2	Ann Arbor Rd	N		>618
Upper	Bell Creek	Bell2	Schoolcraft College	N		n/a
Upper	Minnow Pond	Min4	14 Mile	N		503
Upper	Upper Rouge	Up2	Shiawasee Park	N		618



Want to get more involved? Train to be a Team Leader – bank person or collector Team Leader Training:
Sat. March 28th, 2026 9am-1pm
Plymouth Twp. Park
Register Here

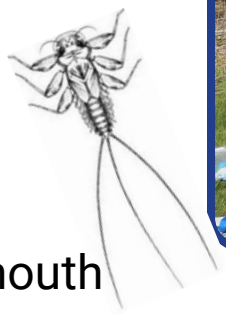
Friends of the ROUGE

Spring Bug Hunt

Surveying Since 1998

Become a Rouge Community Scientist!

Do you ever wonder about what lives in the river besides fish and turtles? Come to our 2026 Spring Bug Hunt and see for yourself the amazing variety of aquatic insects, crayfish, snails and clams that make up the bottom of the river food chain. Volunteers visit sites throughout the headwaters of the Rouge watershed and search for aquatic invertebrates. The presence or absence of these streambed creatures gives us valuable data on the quality of the river water and overall habitat.



Spring Bug Hunt

Saturday, April 11, 2026

10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Meet at Jack Wilcox Theater, Plymouth Arts & Recreation Complex - 650 Church St. Plymouth, MI 48170

Registration Open Until Full

No prior experience needed, but registration is required. Children eight and older are welcome when accompanied by a participating adult. Groups of six or less can sign up together.

Register Now

TheRouge.org/Bug-Hunts

Questions? Email Monitoring Manager, Lauren at leaton@therouge.org

Program supported by:

Alliance of Rouge Communities

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Working together, restoring the river

This program is also supported by Washtenaw County, the City of Southfield, the City of Troy, the Village of Beverly Hills, Northville Township, the City of Plymouth, Plymouth Township, the City of Novi, the City of Livonia, the City of Farmington, the city of Birmingham, the State of Michigan and U.S. EPA Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, donations and memberships.